* *

What is claimed is:

1   1.   A method for conducting electronic commerce through a computer network, the

2   method comprising:

3   receiving, in a merchant computer system of the computer network, a purchase

4   request for a digital product;

5   receiving payment data in the merchant system wherein the payment data specifies

6   remuneration for the digital product;

7   requesting reservation of the digital product from a content manager computer

8   system which can be different from the merchant computer system and which is coupled to

9   the content manager computer system through the computer network;

10   receiving, in the content manager computer system, a delivery request signal from

11   the merchant computer system wherein the delivery request signal requests delivery of the

12   digital product to a client computer system through the computer network;

13   sending transaction identification data to the client computer system wherein the

14   transaction identification data identifies the digital product and represents remuneration in

15   accordance with the payment data;

16   receiving, in a delivery computer system of the computer network, the transaction

17   identification data from the client computer system;

18   determining within the delivery computer system, in accordance with the

19   transaction identification data, the digital product; and

20   sending, from the delivery computer system, the digital product to the client

21   computer system.

1   2.   The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

2   sending, from the delivery computer system to the content manager computer

3   system, a signal indicating that sending the digital product to the client computer system is

4   completed.

1   3.   The method of Claim 2 further comprising:

2   recording, by the content manager computer system, purchase data identifying the

3   digital product and indicating that the digital product was purchased.

1   4.   The method of Claim 3 further comprising:

2   sending, by the content manager computer system, the purchase data to a media

3   licensing computer system such that the media licensing computer system can apportion

4   compensation for sales of the digital product.

1   5.   The method of Claim 4 further comprising:

2   aggregating purchase data from the content manager computer system and other

3   purchase data from one or more other content manager computer systems to form

4   aggregated purchase data; and

5   sending the aggregated purchase data to a rights agent computer system such that

6   the rights agent computer system can apportion compensation for sales of the digital

7   product.

6   The method of Claim 3 wherein recording the purchase data comprises:

2   encrypting the purchase data in such a manner that data held secret by the media

3   licensing computer system is required for decrypting the purchase data.

1   7.   The method of Claim 6 wherein encrypting the purchase data is performed in such

2   a manner that modification of the purchase data subsequent to the encrypting can be detected.

1   8.   The method of Claim 6 wherein encrypting the purchase data is performed in such

2   a manner that removal of the purchase data from a sequence of purchase data records subsequent

3   to the encrypting can be detected.

1   9.   The method of Claim 1 wherein sending the digital product from the delivery

2   computer system to the client computer system comprises:

3   creating a new encryption key which is intended to be used only once;

4   encrypting the digital product with the new encryption key to form an encrypted

5   digital product;

6   sending the encrypted digital product to the client computer system;

7   decrypting the encrypted digital product within the client computer system to

8   recover the digital product; and

9   discarding the new encryption key.

           10.   The method of Claim 1 wherein requesting reservation by the merchant computer

           system comprises:

                            encrypting data representing a requested reservation;

                            sending the data as encrypted to the content manager computer system; and

                            decrypting the data within the content manager computer system.

           11.   The method of Claim 1 wherein, in response to requesting reservation by the

           merchant computer system, the content manager computer system effects such a reservation of

3   the digital product by:

4   forming transaction data which include (i) the transaction identification data, (ii)

5   product identification data which identifies the digital product, and (iii) binding data which

6   binds the transaction to the client computer system; and

7   sending the transaction data to the merchant computer system.

1   12.   The method of Claim 11 wherein sending the transaction identification data

2   comprises encrypting the transaction identification data.

1   13.   The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

2   sending, from the merchant computer system, the payment data to a payment

3   authority; and

4   receiving, in the merchant computer system from the payment authority, payment

5   authorization data.

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7   14.   The method of Claim 13 further comprising:

8   sending the payment authorization data to the content manager computer system.

1   15   The method of Claim 14 wherein sending the payment authorization data

2   comprises:

3   encrypting the payment authorization data.

16.   The method of Claim 14 further comprising:

       recording, by the content manager computer system, that payment for the digital

product has been authorized.

17.   The method of Claim 16 further comprising:

       receiving, in the merchant computer system from the content manager computer

3   system, acknowledgment data which indicates that payment for the digital product has

4   been recorded.

1   18.   The method of Claim 17 wherein the acknowledgment data includes the

2   transaction identification data and a payment authorization token which identifies payment

3   authorization as recorded by the content manager computer system.

1   19.   The method of Claim 18 wherein the delivery request signal includes the

1   transaction identification data and the delivery authorization token.

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3   20.   The method of Claim 19 wherein the delivery request signal is generated in

4   response to selection of a URL by the user wherein the URL specifies the transaction

5   identification data and the delivery authorization token.

1   21.   The method of Claim 17 wherein the acknowledgment data is encrypted.

1   22.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the delivery request signal is received in the

2   content manager computer system from the client computer system; and

3   further wherein the delivery request signal is generated by the client computer

4   system in response to user-generated control signals.

1   23.   The method of Claim 22 wherein the user-generated control signals are incident to

2   a graphical user interface of a web browser; and

3   further wherein the user-generated control signals cause the client computer

4   system to send the delivery request signal to the merchant computer system which in turn

5   communicates the delivery request signal to the content manager computer system.

1   24.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the delivery request signal includes the transaction

2   identification data.

1   25.   The method of Claim 24 wherein the delivery request signal is generated in

2   response to selection of a URL by the user wherein the URL specifies the transaction

3   identification data.

1   26.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the transaction identification data, as received by

2   the delivery computer system is certified as originating from the client computer system.

1   27.   The method of Claim 26 wherein the transaction identification data is certified by

2   signing of the transaction identification data using asymmetric-key encryption.

1   28.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the digital product includes a digitized audio

2   signal.

1   29.   The method of Claim 28 wherein the digital product includes a selection of one or

2   more musical pieces.

1   30.   The method of Claim 29 wherein the digital product further includes textual data

2   representing lyrics of the one or more musical pieces.

1   31.   The method of Claim 29 wherein the digital product further include textual data

2   representing liner notes of the one or more musical pieces.

1   32.   The method of Claim 29 wherein the digital product further include textual data

2   representing artist credits of the one or more musical pieces.

1   33.   The method of Claim 29 wherein the digital product further include textual data

2   representing critical commentary of the one or more musical pieces.

1   34.   The method of Claim 29 wherein the digital product further includes one or more

2   graphical images of album artwork to accompany the one or more musical pieces.

1   35.   The method of Claim 29 wherein the digital product further includes one or more

2   graphical images of advertisement artwork to accompany the one or more musical pieces.

1   36.   The method of Claim 35 wherein the advertisement artwork is selected specifically

2   for the client computer system.

1   37.   The method of Claim 36 wherein the advertisement artwork is selected specifically

2   for the client computer system in accordance with information of the user of the client computer

3   system.

1   38.   The method of Claim 37 wherein the information of the user is demographic.

2   39.   A method for conducting electronic commerce through a computer network, the

3   method comprising:

4   receiving, in a merchant computer system of the computer network, a purchase

5   request for a digital product;

6   receiving payment data in the merchant system wherein the payment data specifies

7   remuneration for the digital product;

8   requesting reservation of the digital product from a content manager computer

9   system which can be different from the merchant computer system and which is coupled to

10   the content manager computer system through the computer network;

11   receiving, from the content manager computer system, voucher data which is

12   readable by the content manager computer system and which represents to the content

13   manager computer system a transaction in which the remuneration specified by the

14   payment data is exchanged for the digital product.

1   40.   The method of Claim 39 further comprising:

2   receiving, from the content manager computer system, inventory data which

3   specifies available digital products, including the digital product, and specified

4   remuneration to the content manager computer system for each of the available digital

5   products.

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1   41.   The method of Claim 40 wherein requesting reservation comprises:

2   encrypting data representing a requested reservation;

3   sending the data as encrypted to the content manager computer system; and

4   decrypting the data within the content manager computer system.

1   42.   The method of Claim 40 further comprising:

2   sending, from the merchant computer system, the payment data to a payment

3 authority; and

4   receiving, in the merchant computer system from the payment authority, payment

5 authorization data.

43.   The method of Claim 42 further comprising:

                   sending the payment authorization data to the content manager computer system.

44.   The method of Claim 43 wherein sending the payment authorization data

comprises:

                   encrypting the payment authorization data.

45.   The method of Claim 44 further comprising:

2   receiving, in the merchant computer system from the content manager computer

3 system, acknowledgment data which indicates that payment for the digital product has

4 been recorded.

1   46.   The method of Claim 45 wherein the acknowledgment data includes the

2 transaction identification data and a payment authorization token which identifies payment

3 authorization as recorded by the content manager computer system.

1   47.   The method of Claim 46 wherein the delivery request signal includes the

2   transaction identification data and the payment authorization token.

1   48.   The method of Claim 47 wherein the delivery request signal is generated in

2   response to selection of a URL by the user wherein the URL specifies the transaction

3   identification data and the payment authorization token.

1   49.   The method of Claim 45 wherein the acknowledgment data is encrypted.

1   50.   A method for conducting electronic commerce through a computer network, the

2   method comprising:

3   conducting a purchase phase of a transaction within a first computer system coupled to the

4   computer network wherein the purchase phase includes selection of a digital product for purchase

5   and authorization of payment for the digital product; and

6   conducting a delivery phase of the transaction within a second computer system which is

7   coupled to the first computer system through the computer network wherein the delivery phase

8   includes